

MERIA

FETHULLAH GULEN AND HIS LIBERAL "TURKISH ISLAM" MOVEMENT

By Bulent Aras and Omer Caha

The Turkish Islamist movement of Fethullah Gulen is one of the most interesting examples of liberal Islamist thinking in the Middle East. Gulen and his followers have tried to produce a religious-political movement favoring modernism, Turkish nationalism, tolerance, and democracy without sacrificing religious precepts. The structure and philosophy of this movement and its leader have been manifested in many groups and educational institutions. Part of the Turkish secularist elite views Gulen as a progressive development, though others see him as a threat in moderate garb.

The community that has developed under the influence of Fethullah Gulen, a prominent religious leader in Turkey, simultaneously has Islamic, nationalist, liberal, and modern characteristics. Its ability to reconcile traditional Islamic values with modern life and science has won a large, receptive audience. The group has even brought together divergent ideas and people, including the poor and the rich, the educated and the illiterate, Turks and Kurds, as well as Muslims and non-Muslims. Gulen's movement could be a model for the future of Islamic political and social activism.

THE TWO MAIN INFLUENCES ON THE MOVEMENT

In comparison to so-called "fundamentalist" Islamic groups, Gulen's movement's views on Islam are surprisingly liberal and tolerant of non-Islamic lifestyles. However, this approach may be the result of the long-term, specific experience of Anatolian people and the unique historical dynamics of Turkish socio-cultural life. For example, the movement is influenced by the

concept of "Turkish Islam" formulated by some nationalist thinkers, and also the *Nurcu* or *Nur* (Light) movement that developed around the writings of Said Nursi.

The main premise of "Turkish Islam" is moderation. Since people of Turkish origin first accepted Islam, they perceived and practiced it under the influence of Sufi ideas. Sufi-oriented Islamic movements kept a certain distance from the politics of their times in contrast to other Islamic movements. For example, the Shiites or Haricis defined themselves according to an imagined other (those who do not support the truth) and became associated with specific political stances over the proper nature of the state and who should hold power. Sufi tradition, however, has described itself as being based on the philosophy that all creatures should be loved as God's physical reflection and objects of the Creator's own love. There is no place for enemies or "others" in this system.

Islam in Turkish political history, during the reigns of both the Seljuks and the Ottomans, remained under the state's

guidance and as a matter for the private sphere. The dominant belief was that a truly religious sultan would govern the state according to the principles of justice, equality, and piety. This approach of keeping religion apart from worldly affairs led to a collective memory that regarded Islam as a flexible and tolerant belief system. Thus, it was assumed that religious institutions should adopt flexible attitudes toward the changing situations of their times. In the Ottoman era, there was never a full-fledged theocratic system.

While the principles of *Shari'a* (Islamic law) were applied in the private sphere, public life was regulated according to customary law formulated under the authority of the state.(1) This aspect of the Ottoman political system made religion's role less rigid. Moreover, the empire accepted it would be a multi-religious state, in which Christian and Jewish subjects would continue to be governed by their own laws.

While Western domination of the Islamic world during the nineteenth century led some Muslims to reject Western ideas, the Ottomans adopted many Western innovations. For example, they opened Western-style schools (for women too), promulgated major programs for reform and human rights (the *Tanzimat Fermani* in 1839 and *Islahat Fermani* in 1856), developed a constitution, and opened a parliament in 1876. Said Nursi became one of the most insistent supporters of the parliamentary system at that time and later of the republican regime in Turkey.

In addition to this history of a Turco-Islamic heritage, another influence on Gulen's movement was the *Nur* (Light) movement (also known as the *Risale-i Nur* movement). The movement was organized around Said Nursi (1877-1961), a prominent

religious authority, and his writings, the *Risale-i Nur* (Letters of Light). It spread throughout Turkey after 1950, despite the state's efforts, and had special success among the young and those educated in Turkey's secular education system mainly because Nursi argued that there was no contradiction between religion and science.(2) The *Risale-i Nur* is well thought of by religious moderates because of its emphasis on the links between Islam and reason, science, and modernity. It also rejects the idea that a clash between the "East" and "West" is either necessary or desirable and advocates the use of reason and in issues related to Islamic belief.

FETHULLAH GULEN'S LIFE

Born in Erzurum in eastern Turkey in 1938, Gulen learned Arabic and religion from his father.(3) In 1953 he began his career as a government preacher (the only legal position a preacher can hold in Turkey) and in 1958, took up a teaching position at a mosque in Edirne. Four years later, he transferred to Izmir where his movement began and came to be known by some as the "Izmir Community." During the era of military rule starting in 1971, he was arrested for clandestine religious activities (organizing summer camps to disseminate Islamic ideas) and spent seven months in prison. In the early 1980s, the police initiated a case against him, but he was not arrested due to the ruling military junta's relative tolerance of Islam. During the premiership of Turgut Ozal, he gained official protection, and is now retired and living in both Izmir and Istanbul in modest homes given to him by followers, while continuing to write extensively.(4)

Throughout his career Gulen, addressed by his followers as "respected teacher" (*hocaefendi*), has traveled the width

and breadth of Turkey. He has also lectured abroad on such subjects as the Quran and contemporary science, the Islamic perception of Darwin, and social justice in Islam.

Gulen has knowledge of both traditional Islamic sources and Western philosophy, and is especially interested in Immanuel Kant.(5) He is an effective speaker in person and on television. As a writer, his books have become bestsellers in Turkey. As Nuriye Akman, a senior Turkish columnist, concedes:

"He is like that "old-style gentleman" we read about in old books and see in old films. He says "*estagfurullah*" [I beg the pardon of God] in every other sentence. He speaks in delicate and polite phrases. He is extremely modest....He speaks in an even tone knowing what he will say and uses correct grammar and an Ottoman vocabulary.(6)

FETHULLAH GULEN'S OWN IDEAS

Gulen does not favor the state applying Islamic law, the *Shari'a*. He points out that most Islamic regulations concern people's private lives and that only a small portion of them concern the state and government. These latter provisions need not be enforced because religion is a private matter, and its requirements should not be imposed on anyone.(7) He looks at Islamic regulations bearing directly on the government—such as those related to taxation and warfare—in the context of contemporary realities.

Concluding that the democratic form of government is the best choice, Gulen is very critical of the regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia. He accepts Said Nursi's argument that the idea of republicanism is very much in accord with the idea of "consultation"

discussed in Islamic sources. Moreover, he fears that an authoritarian regime would impose strict control on differing ideas. At the same time, though, Gulen views the state's role as important in "protecting stability."

Gulen's goals are simultaneously to Islamize the Turkish nationalist ideology and to Turkify Islam. He hopes to re-establish the link between religion and state that existed in the Ottoman era, when leaders were expected to live their private lives based on Islamic regulations. Such an approach, he argues, would strengthen the state, and thus protect society by widening the state's base of legitimacy and enhancing its ability to mobilize the population.

Gulen holds that the Anatolian people's interpretations and experiences of Islam are different from those of others, especially the Arabs. He writes of an "Anatolian Islam" based on tolerance and excluding harsh restrictions or fanaticism and frequently emphasizes that there should be freedom of worship and thought in Turkey. He proposes two keys to provide peace in society—tolerance and dialogue. "We can build confidence and peace in this country if we treat each other with tolerance."(8) In his view, "no one should condemn another for being a member of a religion or scold him for being an atheist."(9)

His ideas about tolerance and dialogue are not restricted to Muslims but also extend to Christians and Jews. Gulen met twice with Patriarch Bartholomeos, head of the Greek Orthodox Fener Patriarchate in Istanbul, and has also met several times with Christian and Jewish religious leaders to promote inter-religious dialogue. In February 1998, for example, he visited the Pope in Rome and received a visiting chief rabbi from Israel. The meeting between the Pope and Gulen was not received positively

by some circles in Turkey. Some argued that this meeting created the impression that Gulen wanted to become the leader of Islam in the world. Others argued that the meeting was a plot to portray him and his community as embracing all sections of society and as enjoying a status higher than the state.

On the question of women's rights, Gulen has progressive views. He believes that the veiling of women is a detail in Islam, and that "no one should suppress the progress of women through the clothes they wear." Gulen also states that, "no one should be subject to criticism for his or her clothing or thoughts."⁽¹⁰⁾ Furthermore, he says, "women can become administrators," contradicting the views of most Islamic intellectuals. Despite these views, modern professional women in Turkey still find his ideas far from acceptable.

Gulen favors education that leads to integration into the modern world. According to Mehmet Ozkaragoz, a U.S.-educated devotee, "A basic principle of Islam is seeking knowledge. We recognize the West as the best source of technology at the moment although, of course, we would prefer the Muslim world to be the leader."⁽¹¹⁾ Moreover, Gulen wishes to merge Islam into the international economic and political systems, and supports Turkey's bid for membership in the European Union.

Here, too, Gulen is influenced by Said Nursi. While Nursi believed that some actions of non-believers harmed humanity's future, he advocated cooperation among believers of all religions as a counter-measure. Gulen goes a step further and extends his tolerance toward secularists and non-believers in Turkey. He sees this approach as a way to revive the multiculturalism of the Ottoman Empire, secure Turkey's stability, and prevent conflicts such as those between Sunnis and Alevis.

FETHULLAH GULEN'S MOVEMENT

Gulen has had considerable success advancing his aim to create a Muslim community that opposes politicized Islam. No one knows the actual size of Gulen's large group of sympathizers (known as *Fethullahcilar* or "the followers of Fethullah," a name Gulen strongly opposes) but guesses range from between 200,000 supporters and 4 million people influenced by his ideas.⁽¹²⁾ It draws much of its support from young urban men, with a special appeal to doctors, academics, and other professionals. It has grown in part by establishing student dormitories, summer camps, high schools, universities, educational and cultural centers, and publications. Although Gulen is its sole leader, a number of his long-time devotees run the community.⁽¹³⁾

Gulen has considerable political weight on the right of the political spectrum, which explains why party leaders are eager to maintain close contacts with him. Since 1994, he has met with a president, a prime minister, the leaders of many parties, and important businessmen. He regularly gives interviews to the country's leading media outlets. In 1997, Turkey's President Suleyman Demirel accepted an award from one of Gulen's organizations and praised the movement's educational activities. Gulen also met with Bulent Ecevit, the long-time leader of Turkey's left and the current prime minister, after which Ecevit reported that their meeting involved a "conversation that focused entirely on religion and philosophy. The meeting had no political dimensions. I found Gulen to be a sincere and candid person. Our meeting was useful."⁽¹⁴⁾ This exchange was remarkable in that it showed Gulen's ideas could also find a receptive audience on the left.

To promote their views, Gulen's followers have set up a wide range of organizations. The Turkish Teachers' Foundation, for example, publishes a monthly journal, Sizinti (Disclosures) and two academic journals, Yeni Umit (New Hope) and the Fountain. It also organizes national and international symposiums, panel discussions, and conferences. Another foundation, the Journalists' and Writers' Foundation, brings secularist and Islamist intellectuals together in what are called *Abant* meetings, putting forward the view that no individual or group has a monopoly on interpreting Islam and that secularism does not mean being anti-religious.(15) The foundation has organized conferences and has invited prominent intellectuals to talk on various issues such as on dialogue among civilizations.

An American expert on Islam, Dale F. Eickelman, calls Gulen "Turkey's answer to media-savvy American evangelist Billy Graham....In televised chat shows, interviews and occasional sermons, Gulen speaks about Islam and science, democracy, modernity, religious and ideological tolerance, the importance of education, and current events."(16) The Gulen community also has its own media, including the daily newspaper Zaman, the television channel Samanyolu, and the radio station Burc. In addition, it distributes video and audio tapes. Those involved in its campaigns include prominent intellectuals from Turkey's prestigious universities.

The Gulen community owns and runs about 100 schools in Turkey. These institutions use the same curriculum as state schools and are under tight state control, but they also emphasize conservative values such as good manners and respect for elders. The schools are funded by the community and instructors are graduates of some of the best Turkish universities. Once the schools

began functioning they became the focus of further fund-raising efforts and are regarded as providing a high-quality education.

In keeping with his Turkish orientation, Gulen encourages paying attention to the Turkish-speaking republics of the former Soviet Union, where he has gained many loyal followers. In October 1996, Gulen's followers financed a non-interest bearing bank, Asya Finans, backed by 16 partners and \$125 million in capital, which aims to raise funds for investments in the Turkic republics. In this way, Gulen hopes to draw the attention of Turkish businessmen to these new countries and in doing so solidify links to them.

Followers of Gulen have also founded more than 200 schools around the world from Tanzania to China, but mostly in the Turkic republics. The schools in the Turkic republics support a philosophy based on Turkish nationalism rather than on Islam. As one reporter has stated, "From the Balkans to China, he wants to see elites formed with Turkey as their model."(17) In Gulen's view, Turkey's virtues include its Ottoman heritage, secularism, market economy, and democracy. These schools also admit non-Muslim students, and because of their high quality, and perhaps use of English as the primary language of instruction, they attract children of the elites and government officials in various countries. The community supports a secular state model in both Azerbaijan and Central Asia.(18) The Turkish analyst, Sahin Alpay, noted that graduates of these schools will go on to hold important positions in all walks of life in these newly independent states.(19)

Arguing that Gulen's group fosters the idea of an Islamic *umma* or a community of Muslims in this region would probably be wrong. The authoritarian leaders of the new republics are highly intolerant of Islamic activities and Gulen's group is very careful

not to provoke these rulers. Small groups are organized to hear a follower of Nursi read and interpret his books. Ideas are also spread through personal relationships. As has been observed by Elisabeth Ozdalga: "The main objective [of the education provided in these schools] is to give the students a good education, without prompting any specific ideological orientation. One basic idea of Gulen's followers is that ethical values are not transmitted openly through persuasion and lessons but through providing good examples in daily conduct."(20) Actually, this way of conveying messages in a subtle manner is no different than the early Islamization of this region at the hands of Ahmed Yesevi and Bahaeddin Naksibendi. Some analysts describe the community's efforts in this region as Islam blended with Turkish nationalism.(21) However, the Gulen community has also opened schools in non-Muslim areas. More accurately, the community is trying to create the idea of Turkey as a role model and leading power in this region.(22)

This does not mean that Gulen's community has advanced without setbacks or even that it enjoys support from the Turkish state. For example, prosecutors investigated statements made by Gulen on a June 18, 1999 television broadcast.(23) Prime Minister Ecevit, who said he saw the program, urged that the government look into the matter rather than having a debate in the media about it. He also made a supportive statement about the movement's educational system: "These schools spread Turkish culture and information about Turkey to the world. They are under the continuous supervision of our state."(24)

What was the problem? Gulen had made some vague statements that were somewhat critical of the Turkish establishment. He apologized publicly, but

some secularists remained suspicious that he was seeking to gain political power over state institutions, including the army.(25) About a week after the broadcast, President Suleyman Demirel sent a warning to Gulen by saying: "I think that a man of religion should not have political targets. Being a man of religion is a hard task, but being a respected man of religion is only possible by being in compliance with the rules of our religion; that is, it is possible by giving good advice to humanity rather than by being involved in worldly affairs."(26)

Clearly, Gulen and his community could again face such allegations in the future. Some segments of the Turkish bureaucracy will continue to hinder the activities of Gulen's community. For example, YOK, the Higher Education Council, has decided not to recognize universities opened overseas by foundations and corporations that support the Gulen community. According to this decision, students who want to transfer from universities abroad run by the Gulen community to Turkish universities will not be allowed to do so. Moreover, YOK will not grant any "equivalency degrees" for degrees conferred by such universities.(27)

Public concern about the Gulen community was raised again after allegations were made shortly after the videotape controversy that the community was behind tension that arose between Uzbekistan and Turkey. This led to the closure of some of the schools run by the community in Uzbekistan. However, Ecevit urged calm: "The Uzbek President has several unjust concerns about Turkey....Turkey does not intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries. I attribute great importance to relations with Uzbekistan. We cannot allow that these relations have been damaged by unnecessary touchiness."(28)

THE GULEN COMMUNITY'S RELATIONS WITH THE TURKISH MILITARY

In the past, the Turkish military has staged three coups—in 1960, 1971, and 1980—to restore stability and order in the country. But in June 1997, rather than stage a fourth coup, the army maneuvered out of office the Refah (Welfare) Party, Turkey's largest vote-getter in the 1995 parliamentary elections. It did so on the grounds that Islamic radicalism was poised to cause a civil uprising which it would be legally obliged to resist, "by force if necessary."⁽²⁹⁾

Gulen takes particular care not to antagonize the army. In fact, he tries hard to persuade the military leadership that his activities do not challenge the status quo and should not be regarded as reactionary (a code word for Islamist). For example, he says that, if need be, he would turn over his community's schools to the state.⁽³⁰⁾ When asked about the threat of reactionaryism being on the agenda of the army-dominated National Security Council (MGK), he replied: "The MGK is a constitutional institution. It is a part of the state. I have never believed that a threat of reactionaryism exists in Turkey. Turkey needs enlightenment. Reactionaryism means going backward. In an enlightened era which has experienced democracy and secularism, it is impossible for the Turkish people to go back."⁽³¹⁾

While the Turkish army appears to accept Gulen and his followers as a domestic movement, not inspired by any foreign influence such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, the suspicion still exists that he may seek to subvert the military from within by sending his followers to the military academies. If this is true, it means that the community will have a difficult relationship with the military leadership. This may already be the case

since it is known that the West Working Group in the Office of the Chief of the General Staff, has prepared a file dealing with the activities of Gulen's followers focusing on their educational institutions abroad. Members of the military have also visited most of these schools in Asia. Furthermore, the military leadership has shown no desire to be seen with Gulen, unlike secular politicians and intellectuals. Ismail Hakk Karaday, the army's chief of staff, did not even reply to an invitation to an *iftar* (a breaking of the Ramadan fast) dinner.

A split in the government over Gulen and his community has potentially significant political consequences, for Gulen has found civilian support even while the military has looked askance at his activities. In a dramatic move, as reports circulated that the military leadership planned to discuss Gulen's activities at a National Security Council meeting, both Suleyman Demirel and Bulent Ecevit endorsed him.⁽³²⁾ Despite the fact that Gulen himself has expressed respect for the military, the military is generally opposed to him. Since conservative circles in Turkey hold the military above all other state institutions and never criticize it, if the military were to oppose Gulen strongly, he would lose his civilian support.

THE GULEN COMMUNITY'S RELATIONS WITH ISLAMISTS

Islamist intellectuals who supported the Refah Party and now support the Fazilet (Virtue) Party (formed by Refah supporters when Refah was closed), generally stay clear of Gulen's movement, limiting their remarks to the nature of the curriculum at the community's schools or to assessing Gulen's intentions. Relations with Refah supporters are tense given that Refah supporters widely believe that the secular establishment uses

Gulen's community to obstruct their path. Necmettin Erbakan, Refah's long-time chairman, even accused Gulen of accepting government support to threaten Refah.(33)

In turn, Gulen frequently criticized Refah Party policies and activities. Keeping his distance from the Refah Party contrasted sharply with Gulen's efforts to carry out a dialogue with the secularist parties. Gulen did acknowledge Refah's impressive organization and growth in membership but noted that if other parties had worked as hard, Refah would not have received 21 percent of the vote in the December 1995 elections. He also concluded that the vote for Refah was larger than its actual base of support when he said that "Our friends in Refah may be annoyed, but I think that Refah's electoral share is still around 15 percent—maybe not even that. The great majority of those who vote for Refah are people who are dissatisfied because there is no strong government that inspires confidence in Turkey."(34)

Gulen held the Refah Party itself responsible for the crisis in Turkish politics that pitted it against the secularist military. He has also deemed Refah's removal from office in June 1997 not unfair. "Hopefully, and God willing, no one will come out and try to drag the nation into a vicious circle [like the one in the 1970s] from which we extricated ourselves with much difficulty."(35) Indeed, he sees Turkey as having barely missed entering a deep conflict along the lines of Algeria.

Since 1996, prosecutors have argued that statements such as those of Istanbul's former Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdogan, read from a poem, that "the minarets are our bayonets, the domes our helmets, and the mosques our barracks,"(36) which led to his criminal prosecution in May 1998, prove the party's anti-secular intentions. Thus, they

sought to shut down Refah as a threat to Turkey's constitutionally enshrined secular system. They did get their way in January 1998, when the chief judge of the Constitutional Court, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, announced Refah's closure on the basis that it had engaged in "actions against the principles of the secular republic."(37)

Gulen rejected comments like those of Erdogan, holding that they "are not binding on believers who respect God in Turkey."(38) He supported the closure of Refah, given his emphasis on the preservation of order, but commented that "it would be more sensible not to close Refah for tactical reasons. Instead, he urged continuing the lawsuit against the party until the next round of elections:

"If a trial is on when the election campaign gets under way, public trust in Refah would be shaken. It would be viewed as a party that will be closed. People would not vote for it. Its votes would move, more democratically, largely to the parties that are most closely aligned with the Refah Party. That would achieve the desired objective."(39)

Gulen predicted the Islamists would not gain from having suffered the closure of Refah, and he rejects the idea that Turkey's new Islamist party, the Fazilet Party, would emerge with more strength among voters. Interestingly, during the media campaign against Gulen in June 1999, the leader of the Fazilet party, Recai Kutan, and some other prominent figures in the party defended Gulen publicly and tried to counter arguments against him. The Islamist media also adopted the same attitude and supported Gulen and his movement when serious questions about him were raised.

THE GULEN COMMUNITY'S RELATIONS WITH SECULARIST INTELLECTUALS

Gulen's June 1999 emergence upon the political scene triggered much controversy among secularist intellectuals, a considerable number of whom have suspected him of using different tactics to reach the same goal as the Islamists. They worry that behind his benign facade, Gulen hides ambitions to turn the country into an Iranian-style Islamic state. The insecurity and intolerance of some secularists causes them to accuse Gulen's community of being the enemy of the Turkish republic. They also worry that secularist parties have offered Gulen support in exchange for a promise on his part not to endorse the Refah Party.

Rusen Cakir, author of a book on the rise of Islam in Turkey, finds that "the [secularist] parties are promoting him as an alternative to Welfare. They're using their enemy's weapon against their enemy."(40) Another expert on Islamists, Iskender Savasir, made similar remarks saying that "I cannot say that Fethullah Hoca is not collaborating with the state."(41) A "radical socialist" weekly, whose sometimes sensationalist and unreliable allegations have been used by the Turkish military, claims that the Gulen group "acquired financial support from the state, particularly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" and points to Tansu Ciller having transferred "large sums from her ministry's secret budget" to his schools and sees this as "one of the reasons for the close relations he has with her."(42)

On the other hand, Gulen has obtained the support of a number of well-known liberal intellectuals such as the journalists Mehmet Altan, Ali Bayramoglu, Mehmet Barlas, Etyen Mahcupyan, Mehmet Ali Birand, and Cengiz Candar who argue that the solution to Turkey's problems

depends on reaching a consensus. Thus, they like the "soft" face of Islam he presents. Birand, for example, recently argued that Gulen has original ideas and that *all* segments of Turkish society, implying the military, should pay attention to his vision. Gulen's critical stance toward the Refah Party also won him the support of some nationalist-conservative intellectuals like Altumur Kilic. As a symbol of this support, Gulen's Turkish Journalists and Writers Foundation hosted an *iftar* dinner in February 1996, to which about a thousand distinguished politicians, businessmen, artists, and intellectuals turned up.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GULEN'S MOVEMENT

A discussion of the significance of Gulen's movement requires considering both the organizational structure of the movement itself, the movement's place in Turkey's political and economic system, and its influence beyond Turkey.

First, the organizational structure of the movement is seen as hierarchical and somewhat non-democratic, which is somewhat unexpected given the community's liberal attitudes and tolerance of differences. Gulen is the sole leader of the movement and the hierarchical order extends from the top to the bottom through an increasing number of *abiler* (elder brothers). The ranking is very strict and each rank's *abi* (elder brother) obtains only a certain amount of knowledge of the activities occurring or under discussion while agreeing to refrain from asking questions or seeking more knowledge about the higher ranks. An *abi* or someone under his supervision may, however, talk to other *abi*'s informally and also talk to those assigned to overseeing the activities. Although this sort of structure may be helpful if the members of the community were to face persecution by the

government, it does raise serious problems for the development of democracy within the group and creates the likelihood that many followers are left out of the decisionmaking process. Of course, those entering into this structure do so of their own free will.

As for the movement's standing in Turkish society, it does occupy a special place given the new cultural space created after the liberalization attempts of the 1980s in Turkey. Its tolerant Islamic discourse that seeks consensus aims to integrate its followers into the existing political system. The Gulen movement does not encourage bringing down the government or even challenging the *status quo*. In fact, because the Gulen movement is highly sensitive about being involved in any controversy, it avoids taking up controversial issues or even entering into public debates. This cautious stance constitutes a self-imposed restriction, and it may prompt more radical Islamic movements to do likewise.

Further, as already noted, Gulen's movement seeks integration with the modern world by reconciling modern and traditional values. This attempt to create a synthesis of ideas resembles the efforts of the last nationalist thinkers of the Ottoman Empire. For example, Ziya Gokalp emphasized the necessity of creating a synthesis based on combining elements taken from Turkish culture (*hars*) and from Western science and technology. Gulen and his devotees go a step further accepting Western civilization as a suitable foundation for material life while considering Islamic civilization suitable for spiritual life. It should be noted, though, that given the movement's conservative character it does appeal to those who find that the Turkish political system is over-emphasizing secularism and modernization.

Another way of viewing the movement's place in Turkish society is to

consider Gulen's community one of many other civil society organizations, despite its hierarchical organizational structure given that the community has achieved autonomy from state power and has been able to play a significant role in society, the main characteristics of civil society organizations. The movement does mobilize a large segment of society, a segment not tied to the state.

The movement must be seen in contrast to a sector that has long been tied closely to the state. A strategy begun as early as the 1920s aimed at creating a native bourgeoisie. The result was a social group that received special incentives and protectionist measures. Some enormously wealthy industrialists emerged with strong links to part of the state bureaucracy. Given the state's willingness to give these wealthy industrialists control over the Turkish economy, competition has been prevented from developing and the political will of the people has been rendered ineffective and even meaningless with respect to influencing economic policy.

In the 1990s, however, policies oriented towards greater liberalization and a shift to export-oriented industrialization have led to the emergence of new, dynamic, export-oriented, small and medium-sized businesses, many based in traditionally conservative Anatolian cities. This segment of society has been mobilized by Gulen's movement. The newly emerging export-oriented economic class is likely to challenge the existing economic structure and pressure the state bureaucracy to end the unequal treatment. It might also be said that the economic activities linked to Gulen's movement as well as the educational activities of Gulen's community have become part of an alternative economy.

This aspect of Gulen's movement, with its focus on disciplined work and efforts motivated by national-religious values, makes comparing it to the Protestant movement of the sixteenth century fitting. As Weber argued in his classic book The Protestant Ethics of Capitalism, religious-spiritual values can motivate people to work hard and accumulate wealth. In Turkey's case, given the current insistence upon a strict secular model of government, citizens may be choosing to worship "safely" by working hard to achieve economic modernization and development, or they may view the "self-discipline" Islam encourages to be attained when they work hard. In fact, Gulen uses the term *hizmet* or service, stating that there is no end to the service that can be carried out to build a peaceful society. At the same time he argues that a person's energy to serve comes from belief and that serving one's society is the most important way to gain God's favor and a place in paradise. This resembles what Weber called "in-worldly asceticism," which was significant in the development of capitalism.

As for the significance of Gulen's movement beyond Turkey, its best potential is in the Turkic countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia where Gulen's emphasis on Turkish Islam will probably weaken the appeal of the message coming out of Iran. In the larger Muslim world, Gulen's movement does pose a potential challenge to Islamism, for its ideas may find receptive audiences among those with access to the outside world--those generally the most prone to Islamism. This said, Gulen's ideas have a much better chance than his organization, for authoritarian states and a general intolerance for new interpretations of Islam could impede it.

CONCLUSION

The unique character of Gulen's movement lies in its attempt to revitalize traditional values as part of modernizing efforts such as the Turkish state's official modernization program. Thus far, it has had some success as it attempts to harmonize and integrate the historically diverse lands of Turkey and reconcile hundreds of years of tradition with the demands of modernity, not easy tasks. In brief, Gulen seeks to construct a Turkish-style Islam, remember the Ottoman past, Islamicize Turkish nationalism, re-create a legitimate link between the state and religion, emphasize democracy and tolerance, and encourage links with the Turkic republics.

Gulen's movement seems to have no aspiration to evolve into a political party or seek political power. On the contrary, Gulen continues a long Sufi tradition of seeking to address the spiritual needs of people, to educate the masses, and to provide some stability in times of turmoil. Like many previous Sufi figures (including the towering thirteenth-century figure, Jalal al-Din Rumi), he is wrongly suspected of seeking political power. However, any change from this apolitical stance would very much harm the reputation of his community.

Ultimately, the future of the Gulen group will be determined by its ability to evolve into an open-minded, flexible, and democratic community, and improve its relations with the Turkish military leadership and secular elites. If these endeavors are successful, then the group could have a major impact on both the Turkish state and Turkish society and on the changes that take place in Turkey in the coming decades. As for Gulen himself, in a new Turkey he would become an even more important religious figure.

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NOTES

1. See Niyazi Berkes, The Development of Secularism in Turkey (London: Routledge, 1998).
2. For more information, see Serif Mardin, Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Albany: State University of New York, 1989).
3. Erzurum's location near the border between Turkey and Iran and the large number of immigrants from the Caucasus there are said to render its Islam state-oriented and nationalistic.
4. Some of them are available in English: The Infinite Light, The Lights of the Way, Questions, Towards the Lost Paradise, and Truth through Colors. In addition, the second half of the 1990s witnessed numerous (speculative, popular, and scholarly) studies of Gulen's life and his community. For example, see Oral Calislar, Fethullah Gulen'den Cemalettin Kaplan'a (From Fethullah Gulen to Cemalettin Kaplan) (Istanbul: Pencere Yayınevi, 1998); Eyup Can, Fethullah Gulen Hocaefendi ile Ufuk Turu (A Tour of New Horizons with Fethullah Gulen) (Istanbul: AD Yayınevi, 1995); Nevval Sevindi, Fethullah Gulen ile New York Sohbetleri (Conversations with

Fethullah Gulen in New York) (Istanbul: Sabah Yayınevi, 1997); Mehmet Ali Soydan, Fethullah Gulen Olayı (The Case of Fethullah Gulen) (Istanbul: Birey Yayınevi, 1999); Osman Ozsoy, Fethullah Gulen Hocaefendi ile Mulakat (An Interview with Fethullah Gulen) (Istanbul: Alfa Yayınevi, 1998); Medya Aynasında Fethullah Gulen (Fethullah Gulen as Portrayed by the Media) (Istanbul: Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakflar Yayınları, 1999).

5. For example, see M. Fethullah Gulen, Varlığın Metafizik Boyutu (The Metaphysical Dimension of Existence) (Istanbul: Feza Yayınevi, 1998)
6. Nokta, February 5-11, 1995, pp. 16-18.
7. Fethullah Gulen, Fasıldan Fasıla 1 (Izmir: Nil Yayınevi, 1995), p. 223.
8. Alistair Bell, "Turkish Islamic Leader Defies Radical Label," Reuters, August 7, 1995.
9. The Turkish Daily News, February 18, 1995.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Alistair Bell, "Turkish Islamic Leader."
12. Tempo, February 7, 1997, pp. 46-50.
13. See the series in Milliyet, August 10-13, 1997.
14. Milliyet, March 26, 1995.
15. The Turkish Daily News and Milliyet, July 21, 1998.
16. Dale F. Eickelman, "Inside the Islamic Reformation," Wilson Quarterly 22, No. 1 (Winter 1998), pp. 84-85.
17. Wendy Kristianasen, "New Faces of Islam," Le Monde Diplomatique (English edition), July 1997.
18. Hurriyet, November 3, 1996.
19. Milliyet, November 4, 1996.
20. Elisabeth Ozdalga, "Entrepreneurs with a Mission: Turkish Islamists Building Schools along the Silk Road," (Paper delivered at the Annual Conference of the North American Middle East Studies

Association, Washington, D. C., November 19-22, 1999).

21. For example, see M. Hakan Yavuz, "Societal Search for a New Contract: Fethullah Gulen, Virtue Party and the Kurds," SAIS Review Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1999).
22. During a series of interviews with the students of the high schools of the community in Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (who were brought to Turkey for a vacation) in August 1999, the students expressed their gratitude and appreciation for their teachers' attempts to educate them. Their perception of Turkey consisted of the projected image of their teachers, i.e. they attributed to all Turkish people the good conduct of their teachers.
23. Anatolia, June 19, 1999.
24. Anatolia, June 22, 1999.
25. Show TV News Bulletin, June 24, 1999.
26. Anatolia, June, 24 1999.
27. Hurriyet, June 27, 1999.
28. Anatolia, June 21, 1999.
29. The Hindu, February 19, 1998.
30. Milliyet, December 30, 1997.
31. Ibid.
32. Nicole Pope, "Generals Get Their Way," Middle East International, No. 571 (March 27, 1998), p. 14.
33. The Turkish Daily News, February 18, 1995.
34. Milliyet, August 31, 1997.
35. Ibid.
36. Milliyet, December 27, 1997.
37. The New York Times and The Washington Post, January 17, 1998.
38. Milliyet, December 30, 1997.
39. Milliyet, August 31, 1997.
40. Alistair Bell, "Turkish Islamic Leader."
41. Nadire Mater, "Rise of Secular Priest Seen as a Threat by Islamicists," Inter Press Service, February 22, 1995.
42. Aydinlik, March 23, 1997.
43. Sabah, May 11, 1997.